

[Short-cuts by birds to the nectar of flowers is well known in the case of numerous species of flowers and many species of birds. A note on the subject by N. K. Tiwary is published in Vol. XXXII of the *Journal* (p. 378). Further references to the habit will be found in 'Flower Birds and Bird Flowers in India' by Salim Ali (*ibid.* Vol. XXXV, pp. 573).—Eds.]

#### 9.—PLAINTIVE CUCKOO (?) PARASITISING PURPLE SUN-BIRD.

I have just seen a queer sight, namely, a purple-rumped sun-bird's nest tenanted by a young cuckoo, probably the 'plaintive'. This monster baby almost overflows from the nest and is fed not only by the sunbirds but also by tailor birds. They seem to take it in turns.

I suppose this case is rather a freak as one would not expect a bird of this size to select one of the tiniest species as foster parents for its offspring.

The nest is in the garden of Major Nabi Khan, next door to the Turf Club.

POONA,  
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[As far as we are aware, this is the first instance recorded (presuming our contributor's identification to be correct, as seems likely) of a Plaintive Cuckoo cuckolding the nest of a sunbird. The tailor bird and wren warblers, which also build purse-like nests are of course well known dupes. The smaller Emerald and Violet Cuckoos (*Chalcites*) of the Himalayas and Assam are regularly parasitic on various sunbirds.

The Himalayan Cuckoo (*C. c. optatus*) and the Asiatic Cuckoo *C. c. telephonus*) in the Himalayas (as well as the Khasia Hills Cuckoo (*C. c. bakeri* in Assam) frequently lay in the dome shaped nests of tiny birds, e.g., the Grey-headed Flycatcher-Warbler (*Seicercus xanthoschistos*) out of which the young imposter can only emerge by bursting the fabric which surrounds it as tightly as a straight jacket.

The most interesting part of the note, perhaps, is that the baby cuckoo was being fed while still *within* the nest by both tailor bird and sunbird. Young birds *outside* the nest and begging for food have frequently been recorded being fed by birds of different species.—Eds.).

#### 10.—'ALPINE SWIFTS' ON RAMESWARAM ISLAND?

On page 247 in *J.B.N.H.S.* Vol. XI, Mr. Biddulph in 'The Birds or Rameswaram Island' says of the Alpine Swift-*Micropus melba bakeri* (Hartert):—

'... The numbers increase from December to March when parties of from twenty to forty may often be seen seated on the telegraph wires alongside the railway line.'